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Nixon's Memories

We do not blame Mr. Nixon for wanting to be filled in fully on any decisions that President Johnson might have been trying to make for him in the period before his formal succession, though, characteristically, he was a little pushy in his public pronouncement on the subject, somehow managing to leave the impression that he and Mr. Johnson would act as a *duumvirate* for the remainder of the incumbent's constitutional term (which impression the proud Johnson, in his turn, was quick to give the lie to.)

We do not blame him, because one of the things that surely must be in Mr. Nixon's mind is that his old chief, General Eisenhower, left his successor, John F. Kennedy, with a perfectly fool-proof plan for invading Cuba that was already on the tracks, supposedly underrailable at that advanced planning stage, already rehearsed and lacking only the "start" signal that Mr. Eisenhower himself for some reason did not get around to giving before the formal transfer of power at Washington was accomplished.

Mr. Kennedy did not have to go ahead with the CIA's zany Bay of Pigs scheme, of course. Just as a new president has the power to make his own new decisions from the moment of his taking the oath of office, so does he have the power to undo any decision of this sort that has been passed along to him for execution. However, Mr. Kennedy, despite all his own rational and even mystical forebodings, *thought* that he had to go ahead, as he thought he had to reconfirm in office J. Edgar Hoover and Allen W. Dulles as his first official acts as president, lest somebody think that he, a Boston Irishman, a war hero and a parishioner of Cardinal Cushing, was somehow soft on meeting the Communist challenge, as Mr. Nixon had implied he would be during the 1960 campaign.

This is how the Nixons of this country win, even while they appear to be losing. For the consequences of the abortive Bay of Pigs landing continue to haunt us, and, depending upon how much you want to believe of what little we really know of the thoughts of Lee Harvey Oswald, will continue to haunt us for all of foreseeable time. We say this, because there is evidence for arguing at least that the Bay of Pigs decision, in the end, was to cost Jack Kennedy his life.

Some of the other consequences are less arguable, being a part of the record.

There was Senator Fulbright, for example, who having been right in his official attitude toward the proxy invasion—the only man in a position of influence in Washington who was—suddenly blew his cool during the missile crisis and wanted to mount an invasion of our own. This was wholly out of character for him, because for once, consciously or unconsciously, he was responding to what he thought "they"—the Nixons and those who support men like Nixon—would have professed to think he ought to do but wouldn't do, rather than relying upon his own true instincts.

There was the missile crisis itself, in which all of us everywhere came the closest we have so far to being blown to Kingdom Come.

There was Lyndon B. Johnson's subsequent over-reaction in the Dominican Republic occupation, which was directly related to the failure in Cuba, and which some people think was at least as responsible for the alienation of the nation's intellectual community as the expanding adventure in Vietnam.

Eight years may seem a long time since Richard Nixon was in Washington, but it is not really that long. He was "winning" all the time—even when he didn't know it.

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